



COALITION OF LARGE TRIBES

Blackfeet Nation • Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe • Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation of Oregon • Crow Creek Sioux Tribe • Crow Nation
Eastern Shoshone Tribe • Fort Belknap Indian Community • Hopi Tribe • Mandan, Hidatsa & Arikara Nation • Mescalero Apache Tribe
Muscogee (Creek) Nation • Navajo Nation • Northern Arapaho Tribe • Northern Cheyenne Tribe • Rosebud Sioux Tribe
San Carlos Apache Tribe • Shoshone-Bannock Tribes • Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation
Sisseton Wahpeton Sioux Tribe • Spirit Lake Nation • Spokane Tribe • Standing Rock Sioux Tribe • Ute Indian Tribe
Ute Mountain Ute Tribe • Walker River Paiute Tribe

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

OJ Semans, Sr.

Executive Director, Coalition of Large Tribes

Before the House Committee on Natural Resources

Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations & Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs

Oversight Hearing: “Innovative Technologies and Initiatives to Tackle the MMIP Crisis in

Indian Country”

July 14, 2026

OPENING STATEMENT

Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee: My name is OJ Semans, Sr. I am an enrolled member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe and Executive Director of the Coalition of Large Tribes, or COLT. COLT represents the interests of more than 50 tribes with reservations of 100,000 acres or more, collectively controlling approximately 95 percent of Indian lands in the United States. Before my advocacy work, I served in Indian Country law enforcement, where I worked violent crime and narcotics investigations.

This testimony focuses on practical solutions. Funding deficiencies remain in this written record because no public safety system can operate without personnel, but the immediate question before this Committee is how Congress, the Trump Administration, DOJ, FBI, BIA-OJS, and tribal governments can make existing tools work better: task forces, trained investigators, prosecutor engagement, alerting authority, reliable data, family communication, case review, and tribal jurisdiction.

I. ACKNOWLEDGING PROGRESS AND BUILDING ON IT

COLT thanks FBI Director Kash Patel for his public focus on MMIP and [for meeting with COLT executives in July 2025](#). At that meeting, tribal leaders pressed for stronger federal action, increased MMIP data sharing, expanded law enforcement presence, and better DNA testing capacity. COLT also appreciates Operation Not Forgotten and the Administration’s effort to deploy FBI personnel to support tribal-community violent-crime and missing-person work.

Those steps should become a standing federal-tribal operating model. COLT recommends named federal points of contact, written escalation protocols, after-action reviews, measurable outcomes,



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rapid DNA and digital-evidence support, and a formal process for tribal governments and families to elevate stalled MMIP, homicide, and violent-crime cases.

COLT specifically appreciates Secretarial Order 3450 issued on May 5, 2026, and DOI's accompanying announcement that the Order launches an Indian Country Violent Crime Task Force to strengthen law enforcement coordination, protect families, and confront violent crime and drug activity in Indian Country. The Order's direction to BIA-OJS to coordinate with DOJ, FBI, tribal police, and other partners gives Congress a practical implementation framework for this hearing.

Those advancements should now be implemented with tribal governments as full partners: named federal points of contact, written escalation protocols, after-action reviews, transparent metrics, rapid DNA and digital-evidence support, and a formal mechanism for tribes and families to elevate stalled MMIP, homicide, and violent-crime cases.

II. SAY THEIR NAMES AND MEASURE THE RESPONSE

This hearing is about real people. We should say their names: [Ella Mae Begay](#), Navajo; [Thomas Rockroads, III](#), Northern Cheyenne; [Tylen Valandra](#), Rosebud; [Savannah Standing Bear](#), Rosebud; and [Steven Lopez](#), a 10-year-old Pine Ridge boy recovering from a gunshot wound to the head after a Father's Day shooting. Their families deserve investigation, communication, and accountability.

Every MMIP or violent-death case should be evaluated on practical benchmarks: Was the scene secured? Were witnesses identified and interviewed? Was evidence preserved and tested? Were NCIC, NamUs, AMBER, or MEP tools used promptly? Was the family assigned a liaison? Was a federal prosecutor consulted early? Were federal, tribal, state, county, and municipal partners communicating from the first day? These answers matter more than announcements.

III. DOJ MUST BE A FULL OPERATIONAL PARTNER, NOT JUST A FUNDING PARTNER

COLT appreciates DOJ's engagement through the FBI, U.S. Attorneys' Offices, Office of Tribal Justice, Office for Victims of Crime, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and related MMIP initiatives. But DOJ's role should be institutionalized as a permanent operational partnership rather than periodic initiatives that depend on individual personalities or temporary assignments.



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DOJ can make an immediate difference by ensuring every MMIP, homicide, and violent-crime case in Indian Country has a clearly identified federal point of contact, rapid prosecutor engagement, timely forensic support, family communication, and structured coordination with tribal governments. DOJ should establish written protocols among FBI field offices, U.S. Attorneys, BIA-OJS, tribal law enforcement, tribal prosecutors, victim-service providers, and state and local partners.

COLT recommends DOJ-supported recurring cold-case and active-case reviews for unresolved MMIP and violent-crime investigations. These reviews should include tribal investigators, federal prosecutors, FBI personnel, BIA-OJS, victim advocates, family liaisons, and forensic experts. Cases often remain unresolved not because evidence does not exist, but because leads were not coordinated, information was not shared, or resources were unavailable at critical points.

IV. USE THE HPPG LESSON: SUSTAINED STAFFING, MEASURED OUTCOMES, AND FOLLOW-THROUGH

Federal surges can help families waiting for answers, but they must be evaluated and converted into permanent capacity. The 2010 BIA-OJS High Priority Performance Goal Initiative, or HPPG Surge, showed what works: sustained 24-month staffing at parity levels on Wind River, Standing Rock, Rocky Boy's, and Mescalero Apache. The [Indian Law and Order Commission found](#) violent crime dropped by 55 percent overall, including 68 percent at Mescalero Apache. The lesson is disciplined deployment, adequate staffing, measured outcomes, and follow-through.

Congress should require DOJ and DOI to measure every MMIP or violent-crime surge: deployment locations, duration, cases supported, arrests, prosecutions, response times, case clearances, missing-person outcomes, DNA-testing timelines, family communications, and whether tribal capacity remained after the deployment ended.

V. SCALE COLT'S 2023 MMIW/P COLD CASE TRAINING MODEL

COLT has already piloted practical solutions. In October 2023, COLT convened an [MMIW/P cold-case training in Billings, Montana](#) with the Vidocq Society, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, the BIA Indian Police Academy, and the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center. Agenda attached. The curriculum focused on first-responder priorities, initial reports, witness and suspect identification, interviews and interrogations, evidence collection and



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protection, checklists, homicide and major-crime scene management, chain of custody, cold-case unit operations, report writing, peer review, chronologies, and courtroom-ready documentation.

Secretarial Order 3450's emphasis on expanded basic training through the Indian Police Academy's Advanced Training Center at Camp Grafton should be connected to COLT's cold-case and first-48-hours model so BIA-OJS, tribal police, FBI agents, federal prosecutors, and victim advocates train together before the next crisis.

DOJ should help scale that model into recurring regional training for patrol officers, first-line supervisors, investigators, dispatchers, prosecutors, victim advocates, and family liaisons. Training should be tied to real case review and produce standardized checklists for the first 48 hours.

VI. CREATE A GREAT PLAINS MMIP AND VIOLENT CRIME TASK FORCE PILOT

COLT recommends a Great Plains MMIP and Violent Crime Task Force Pilot based in or near Rapid City, South Dakota, to support Rosebud, Cheyenne River, Standing Rock, Crow Creek, Northern Cheyenne, Pine Ridge, and other Great Plains communities. DOJ should designate a lead U.S. Attorney's Office and a dedicated FBI coordination team so prosecutors and investigators are involved from the beginning, not only after charging decisions are considered.

The pilot should include FBI, BIA-OJS, U.S. Attorneys, tribal police, tribal prosecutors, state investigators, county sheriffs, municipal departments, emergency managers, and victim-services organizations. It should use lessons from the Eid deposition, the Indian Law and Order Commission, and COLT's cold-case training: rapid response, cross-deputation, interagency communication, standardized case intake, evidence protocols, family liaison assignments, and outcome tracking.

VII. INTEGRATE AMBER AND MEP ALERTS AS ONE PRACTICAL FRAMEWORK

Congress should authorize integrated training and implementation of AMBER Alerts and Missing and Endangered Persons, or MEP, Alerts as complementary tools. MEP Alerts provide immediate public notification when a missing or endangered person does not yet meet AMBER criteria; AMBER remains the specialized response for suspected child abductions. The two systems should work together so investigators do not lose critical time while determining which threshold applies.



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Congress should also prioritize tribal alerting authority. Native Public Media’s testimony explains that only sixteen tribal governments are FEMA-certified Alerting Authorities. Tribes need support for FEMA IPAWS enrollment, governance documents, memoranda of understanding, technical implementation, exercises, recertification, dispatch procedures, public messaging, State-Tribal alert protocols, NCIC/NamUs data improvement, family assistance, tribal broadcaster partnerships, and annual exercises. DOJ should partner with FEMA, FCC, FBI, BIA-OJS, and tribal governments so alerts are integrated into investigative response plans rather than treated as isolated communications tools.

VIII. PRESERVE VAWA, TRIBAL DATA SOVEREIGNTY, AND COLT’S JURISDICTION FIX

Practical solutions also require authority. Congress should preserve and expand VAWA tribal jurisdiction, protect tribal data sovereignty, and enact [COLT’s jurisdiction fix](#) to close gaps that leave non-Indian offenders beyond direct tribal accountability. Congress fixed a Supreme Court-created gap before through the Duro fix. COLT’s proposal would amend 25 U.S.C. § 1301 to recognize tribal criminal jurisdiction over all persons located in Indian Country, subject to due process protections under 25 U.S.C. § 1302(c).

Technology can locate a phone, issue an alert, or map a search area. Jurisdiction determines who may investigate, arrest, prosecute, and prevent the next offense.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. Direct DOJ to establish formal MMIP coordination protocols among FBI field offices, U.S. Attorneys’ Offices, BIA-OJS, tribal law enforcement, victim-service providers, and tribal governments.
2. Create DOJ-supported active-case and cold-case review teams for unresolved MMIP, homicide, and violent-crime investigations in Indian Country.
3. Establish a Great Plains MMIP and Violent Crime Task Force Pilot with a lead U.S. Attorney’s Office, dedicated FBI coordination, standing federal-tribal-state-local protocols, and family-liaison requirements.
4. Convert Operation Not Forgotten and similar surges into measurable deployments with after-action reports and tribal capacity-building requirements.
5. Scale COLT’s 2023 MMIW/P cold-case training into recurring regional training using Vidocq, NCMEC, BIA Indian Police Academy, NIWRC, FBI, DOJ, and tribal experts.



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6. Authorize integrated AMBER/MEP training and implement a Tribal Alerting Authority Initiative so tribes can issue timely IPAWS, WEA, EAS, AMBER, and MEP notifications.
7. Create model first-48-hour protocols for MMIP, homicide, child endangerment, sexual assault, domestic violence, trafficking, and narcotics-linked missing-person cases.
8. Improve NCIC, NamUs, GIS mapping, dashboards, DNA testing, digital evidence workflows, and data sharing while protecting tribal data sovereignty.
9. Preserve and expand VAWA tribal jurisdiction and enact [COLT's jurisdiction fix](#) (attached) to restore local accountability for crimes committed in Indian Country.
10. Maintain the written-record funding request for full tribal public safety funding, while tying new appropriations to measurable outcomes, training, alerting authority, DOJ collaboration, and investigative performance.

FUNDING RECORD PRESERVED

COLT continues to believe that tribal public safety and justice must be funded at actual need. BIA-OJS reporting identifies funding at roughly 13 percent of need and an additional 25,655 personnel required using DOJ's 2.8-officers-per-1,000 baseline. Those figures remain part of the written record.

However, COLT urges Congress and the Administration to pair funding with operational reforms: DOJ collaboration, prosecutor engagement, training, alerting authority, task forces, data systems, family communication, tribal jurisdiction, and measurable outcomes. If President Trump understood the gravity of public safety conditions on our large land base reservations, we know he would help us. We hope this hearing sheds light on that and we can get his attention.

CONCLUSION

The Trump Administration and DOJ have an opportunity to turn national focus on MMIP into a durable operating model: sustained staffing, FBI-led coordination, U.S. Attorney engagement, COLT-style training, integrated AMBER/MEP alerts, tribal alerting authority, data improvement, forensic support, family communication, and restored tribal jurisdiction.

Technology can help find missing people. Practical capacity, DOJ collaboration, trained investigators, alerting authority, and tribal authority can help prevent people from going missing or being killed in the first place. Every Native person deserves an immediate response. Every



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family deserves answers. Every tribal nation deserves the operational tools and legal authority necessary to protect its citizens.